

Appl. No. 09/944,774

Amendments to the Specification:

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 1, line 4 with the following amended paragraph:

This invention relates to the use of surfactants which may be inactivated or degraded upon contact with one or more materials possibly in one or more layers of a substrate. The composite material includes a surfactant that can be applied to ~~the top layer of the~~ ~~a~~ substrate such as a nonwoven web such that the surfactant reduces the surface tension of a fluid so that the fluid intake ~~through the top layer~~ into the substrate is enhanced and such that the surfactant is inactivated upon contacting or passing into another portion of the substrate.

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 1, line 17 with the following amended paragraph:

While surfactants may produce a number of desired properties and benefits, prior usage of articles containing surfactants or having surfactants on the surface of the substrate reveals that surfactants frequently have adverse effects on the properties of the materials and/or surroundings to which the surfactants pass. For example, a surfactant is most commonly applied to a surface of a substrate in anticipation of fluid contact; however, after the surfactant is contacted by a fluid, some or all of the surfactant typically dissolves in the fluid and flows into the substrate with the fluid. The presence of the surfactant in the fluid in the substrate may result in reduced fluid flow (wicking) through the substrate due to reduced fluid surface tension which reduces capillary pressure. That is, if the substrate contains a surfactant the surfactant will enhance the passage of a contacting fluid into the substrate. However, the presence of the surfactant in the fluid reduces the wicking force (speed) and thus the substrate directly under the liquid penetration point can become saturated. This saturation will restrict the passage of more fluid into the substrate which may result in leakage and, an undesirable appearance of the product or even adverse contact with the skin of the wearer. The presence of a superabsorbent in the substrate magnifies the problem. As the surfactant containing fluid is being wicked at a slower rate, the fluid has a longer residency time near the superabsorbent near the fluid entry location into the substrate. These superabsorbent particles continue to swell and absorb fluid which eventually will lead to "gel blocking". More specifically, the phenomenon of gel blocking describes the tendency of hydrogel materials or so-called "superabsorbent materials" to swell in place once wetted and produce gelatinous material which blocks further transmission of the fluid being absorbed. The gelatinous material not only effects the fluid intake or absorption properties of the superabsorbent material, but also inhibits the wicking and dispersion properties of the total absorbent material. Therefore, where the fluid being absorbed contacts the absorbent material in a highly localized area at a rate

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which exceeds that which the superabsorbent material can readily tolerate, much of the absorbent medium frequently is not utilized at all, thus resulting in an inefficient product.

Please delete the paragraph beginning at the end of the above paragraph and that was added by the previous amendment on page 2, at about line 13 which starts with "To maximize the utilization of".